Abstract

The purpose of this article is to offer conceptual tools that may help one to reflect on the biopolitics of health, based on the works of Michel Foucault, Agnes Heller and Hannah Arendt. For Foucault, since the 18th century, biological life and the health of the nation became fundamental targets of a power over life that emphasized the notions of sexuality, race and degeneration in particular, with the objective of optimizing the biological quality of the population. For Arendt, this trend toward the politicization of life is deeply antipolitical. Life fills the void left by the decomposition of the public sphere. In the case of Agnes Heller, the antipolitical character of the biopolitical discourse manifests itself in the ongoing quest for near-scientific legitimation. The thoughts on race, gender and health mimic scientific thinking and replace opinion by truth. If politics is the arena for the confrontation of opinions, dialogue, initiative, novelty, spontaneity and free action, scientifically legitimated biopolitical thinking is the space of truth, certainty, necessity, determinism and causality, where dialogue is substituted by the politics of self-seclusion, of friends and enemies, and the plurality of opinions is reduced to a single politically correct opinion.

Keywords

Biopolitics; health; Michel Foucault; Agnes Heller; Hannah Arendt.